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THE AUTOCHTHONOUS ELEMENT IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

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POONA

1. THE PROBLEM: In his classic study of the great Indian epic, E. W. Hopkins summarized his general conclusions[1] as follows: "Bharata (Kuru) lays, perhaps combined into one, but with no evidence of an epic before 400, B. C. A Mahabharata tale with Pandu heroes, lays and legends combined by the Puranic diaskeuasts, Krishna as a demigod (no evidence of didactic form or of Krishna's divine supremacy), 400-200, B. C. Remaking of the epic with Krishna as all-god, intrusion of masses of didactic matter, addition of Puranic material old and new; multiplication of exploits, 200, B. C. to 100-200, A. D. The last books added with the introduction to the first book, the swollen Anuśāsana separated from Śānti and recognized as a separate book, 200 to 400, A. D.; and finally 400, A. D.+: occasional amplifications . . .".

No material exception can be taken to this if one restricts the inquiry to the lines followed by Hopkins; but then, it becomes impossible to motivate the remarkable transformations of the vast collection as a whole. In this note, supplementary considerations are proposed so that the scope of investigation may be enlarged and some further insight gained into the mechanism of inflation by analysis of the underlying social changes. The need to hold the interest of successively changing audiences composed of elements decidedly more heterogenous than, say, in the Athens of Peisistratus, accounts for the gaping seams of the extraordinary patchwork. The discussion here calls special attention to one hitherto neglected factor.

The Mbh is usually regarded as the story of a great battle, with the addition of innumerable narratives that are not relevant to the main action. Hopkins failed to attach any importance to the frame-story that unaccountably makes the Mbh as it now stands into the report of a great *yajña* fire-sacrifice, not of the battle. Janamejaya III performed this sacrifice to encompass the destruction of the *nāgas*, long after the fighting was over. These Nagas are demonic beings who appear simultaneously in the guise of poisonous cobras and also in human form. One of them, Takṣaka, had caused the death of king Parikṣit II, Janamejaya's father. The Bharatan stories, whether of war or peace, enter as in the normal Yajurveda-Brāhmaṇa tradition of revolving narrative (not necessarily a cycle) during all *sattra* sacrifices of long duration. The result of the frame-story in this particular case, however, was quite anomalous; the patron king Janamejaya was diverted from the very purpose and main object of the sacrifice, complete destruction of the Nagas. Even the prime offender Takṣaka managed to escape. The 'snakes' were saved (1. 53. 7; 18. 5. 27) by the young visiting priest Āstīka, himself the son of a Brahmin ascetic Jaratkāru by a Naga girl also named Jaratkāru. The father belonged to the Yāyāvara-kula, which was rescued from extinction by this peculiar marriage—doubly banned by the smṛtis inasmuch as it means both apostacy and miscegenation; how the son Āstīka could be regarded and initiated as a Brahmin is a mystery. (The famous poet Rājaśekhara claimed descent as late as the 9th century, A. D., from a Yāyāvara line; he married a lady from the feudal Rajput or Marāṭhā Cāhamāna family, certainly not Brahmins). As for the irregular union, the Central Indian medieval dynasty Nṛpati-parivrājaka-kula was similarly founded by a Brahmin 'ascetic' Suśarman (Fleet as in note 14; p. 115, line 5 of the inscription of Saṃkṣobha; also inscriptions no. 22, 23 of Hastin) who forsook both his vow of celibacy and his caste among the aborigines. King Lokanātha of Bengal boasted of his descent from a Brahmin father and an aboriginal gotra-devī (*EI* 15. 206-7). We might note in passing that Jaratkāru's marriage was matrilocal; Āstīka was brought up by his Naga maternal uncle Vāsuki.

Hopkins chose to ignore this particular feature

* The Mahābhārata (Mbh) text cited is of the Poona critical edition initiated by V. S. Sukthankar at the Bhaṇḍārkar O. R. Institute, and still incomplete; reference by number of *parvan, adhyāya, śloka*, without the siglum. For the background material, I have used two books of my own; a) *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956; b) *Myth & Reality*, Bombay, 1962.

[1] E. W. Hopkins: *The Great Epic of India*; its Character and Origin (New Haven, 1920); but I use the critical edition of the Mbh for citations, which will differ from those given by Hopkins.

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of the Mbh. Whereas Sheherazade's tales over the Thousand and One Nights fit logically into their frame story, the Mahābhārata proper is turned into a rather irrelevant by-product by the story of Āstīka's successful intervention. If the subparvan named *āstīka* is to be included in what Hopkins called 'the introduction to the first book' and lumped together with the 'last books' as a final addition between 200-400, A. D., his suggested development of the Mbh diaskeuasis would lack cogency and plausibility. If Kṛṣṇa as all-god is placed at an earlier stage, why is he neglected so completely in the final book? There, the heroes attain the vedic heaven of Yama and Indra; Kṛṣṇa-Govinda appears only as a palpable interpolation in the northern version, a single doubtful line (18. 4.2^{ab} with wavy line) which any editor who had grasped V. S. Sukthankar's clear logic would have deleted. After the Bhagavad-gītā (which Hopkins surely did not include among the 'occasional amplifications') the principals should have been sent to their ultimate refuge in Kṛṣṇa's all-embracing divine essence. Instead, we find only that the 16,000 women of the dark god's teeming harem eventually sank into the Sarasvatī river, turned back into apsarasas and went to Vāsudeva (18. 5. 21); no one else reached the all-god of the Gītā. It is not clear just where Kṛṣṇa himself had gone; his elder brother Balarāma reverted to the great Naga who bears this earth upon his head to keep it from submergence into the waters (16.5.12-15; 18.5.20).

How could the Nagas—demonic enough to be destroyed by a fire-sacrifice—have at the same time this extraordinary importance, to the extent that the all-god's elder brother was the incarnation (1. 61. 91) of the greatest 'cobra'? The answer necessarily depends upon our explicit or implicit basic hypotheses. Was the whole story pure invention, or did the narrative have some historical basis which has now passed into legend and myth? I propose to show that the historical basis of the narrative is infinitesimal, though the diaskeuasis does have considerable historic significance.

2. THE 'HISTORICAL' INTERPRETATION. To reach an unambiguous conclusion, there must be some criterion of validity. This can only be agreement with such material evidence as may be derived from archaeology, history, ethnography and sociology, in so far as available sources permit. Against the hypothesis of 'pure invention,' one must ask why the invention took these particular forms. Bhīma, poisoned by his Kaurava cousins and thrown into the river bound hand and foot as he lay unconscious, was saved by the Nagas who sent him back to his mother, stronger than before (1. 119, an interpolation). Psychoanalysts, for example, could do a great deal with Arjuna's death in battle at the hands of his own son Babhruvāhana (14.78). But the episode ends in the dead hero's being brought back to life by the mysterious jewel which the great cobra is supposed to carry in his forehead. This jewel had to be specially brought from the Naga underworld by Ulūpī, a princess of the Kauravya Naga line with whom Arjuna had briefly consorted in the Ganges (1. 206). That the episode had general currency is clear from the rival Mbh version of Jaimini whereof the 14th book still survives. The last army leader of the Kurus, Aśvatthāman, bore such a jewel (at once a prophylactic charm and a symbol of sovereignty) in his head from his very birth (10.11.20; 10.15.27, *ff.*; 10.16.19, *ff.*). That this relatively minor character of the Mbh is the king Spatembas[2] with whom, according to Megasthenes, Indian (Magadhan) kings began their long dynastic list is philologically obvious. A rather corrupt copper-plate charter of the Pallava king Skandhaśiṣya (*sic*) claims descent for the founder of his line from Aśvatthāman, son of Droṇa of the Bharadvāja clan, and a 'snake woman' (*EI* 5.1898-9.49-53). Less obvious is the further connection with Nagas in general through the capital Ahicchatrā ('snake-canopy') of Northern Pañcāla which the Pāṇḍavas wrested from Drupada to bestow upon their preceptor Droṇa, father of Aśvatthāman. Why should Aśvatthāman of all people count as one of the seven immortals (*cirañjīvin*) along with Bali and Hanumān (of whom the latter is still and the former obviously had been an important cult figure)? The interweaving of *nāga*-myth into the Mbh was essential to the fabric and the pattern, not merely the result of some mental quirk of the bards.

The historical interpretation attempted by Pargiter[3] takes the Puranic lists of dynasties as genuine and valid but for textual aberrations due to copyists. This led him to place the Mahābhārata

[2] J. W. McCrindle: *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian; Indian Antiquary* 6. 1876, pp. 89-90; 334, from section 8 of Arrian's *Indika*, which quotes Megasthenes (fragment L). The Persian for *aśva* would be *aspa*, from which the Greeks would derive *spa* for the first syllable.

[3] F. E. Pargiter: *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (Oxford 1922); cited as *AIHT* with page numbers.

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war as a real event of about 950, B. C. The origin of the 'Ailas or Aryans' would then seem to be at Allahabad (*AIHT* chap. xxiv & p. 296), whence they spread out in all directions. The '92 steps (generations) from Purūravas to the Bharata battle' places the first 'Aryan' king Purūravas at 2050, B. C. (*AIHT* p. 301). The Nagas (taken as a primitive tribe or people) 'established themselves at Takṣaśilā and assailed Hastināpura—which indicates that the Punjab kingdoms that played so prominent a part in the battle had fallen, and certainly little more is heard of them. The Nagas killed Parikṣit II, but his son Janamejaya III defeated them and peace was made. Still they held the north-west, the principalities on the Sarasvatī and at Indraprastha disappeared, and Hastināpura remained the outpost of the Hindu kingdoms of North India' (*AIHT* p. 285). Pargiter's synchronous tables put Rāma Jāmadagnya (Paraśurāma) at about 1670, B. C. 'After Rama's time, the Haihayas recovered their power and extended their conquests into North India, making continual raids, overthrowing kingdoms, founding none, and devastating countries, which were then overthrown by tribes from the northwest also . . . The carnage and ruin must have continued for nearly a century, and the deplorable condition to which North India was reduced may be imagined by that caused by the Marathas and the Persian and Afghan invasions in the eighteenth century (A. D.), for the Haihayas occupied the same region as the Marathas and the two periods are strictly comparable and remarkably alike' (*AIHT* 270-71).

Nothing could be more explicit or more inaccurate than this imagined reconstruction: Before the imperial Pax Britannica, Indian history as Pargiter saw it had no real change of structure; dynasties succeeded one another, raids and carnage were the norm, with an occasional great war at Panipat. But what did Pargiter understand by 'Hindu' kingdom? What could 'Hinduism' mean some centuries before the Vedas? What form did the kingdoms take? His fanciful 'history' is easy to demolish. Alexander and his successors found no Nagas at Taxila or anywhere else; nor is there any Greek mention of Hastināpura and the Kurus. On the contrary, the great Indian kingdom of the Punjab in the 4th century, B. C., was expanding under a Pūru aristocracy and chieftain (king Pôros). Moreover, continuity is shown by the oldest Veda which places the Pūrus in the Punjab, fighting against king Sudās over a diversion of river waters. The vedic Pūrus are generally treated as an Aryan tribe with good Brahmin priests.[4] The name Kuru is represented only by king Kuruśravaṇa, 'fame of the Kurus' in *RV* 10.32.9 but by nothing else in the oldest Veda. This fits in very well with Mbh genealogies which make the Kurus a branch of the Pūrus. At the time of the Buddha, there existed a tiny Kuru land with its petty king or chief, somewhere in the Delhi-Meerut region. In Buddhist tradition,[5] the Kurus had the lineage of Yudhiṭṭhila (*F* 4.361; 5.59 ff.), and names like Pāṇḍava-pabbata also occur. Nothing appears of the great epic magnification of Kuru power, no mention of a former Kuru empire, or of a tremendous Bharatan war, all of which must derive from the imagination of Kuru or later bards, not from history. There is not the remotest equivalence in scale between the war—if any—and the colossal epic which describes it.

There still remains the question of the lost but strongly divergent lists of kings and dynasties; *e. g.*, the one known to the Greeks as headed by Spatembas-Aśvatthāman. The extant Puranas do not preserve all records, only the small fraction that happened to suit the various sectarian purposes of a narrow line of priestly scribes. The resultant genealogies and king-lists were recognised even by devout and credulous Hindus of the 12th century, A. D., as palpable forgeries.[6]

3. THE SOCIAL MILIEU. There seems to be no objection at first sight to the hypothesis of dynasties ruling various countries or peoples in India

[4] Vedic reference material will be found handily gathered in A. A. MacDonnell and A. B. Keith: *Vedic Index Of Names And Subjects* (2 vol. London 1912), though my interpretation often differs, and I have made use of other references. Viśvāmitra, the older Bharata priest, was superseded by Vasiṣṭha as is reported by various commentators on books 3 and 7 of the Ṛgveda.

[5] Buddhist Pali tradition, with supplementary information from the Mahāvastu and a few other sources is comprehensively reported by G. P. Malalasekera in his *Dictionary Of Pali Proper Names* (2 vols., London, 1937). For the Jatakas, reference is here made with the code-letter *F* followed by volume and page of V. Fausböll's Pali Text Society edition (7 vols., London 1877-97).

[6] R. C. Hazra: *Studies In The Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Dacca, 1940); p. 7, footnote, refers to the unpublished Dānasāgara of the Sena king Ballālasena, fol. 4*a*: *mṛṣā-vaṃśānu-caritaiḥ*. In general, Hazra shows the extant Puranas to belong to the feudal period.

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about 1600, B. C., in much the same way as in 1600, A. D., with superficial changes in names, speech and dress. After all, the Indus valley culture shows highly developed urban settlement early in the third millennium, B. C., of which nothing was known at the time Pargiter wrote but which could support his underlying assumption of a fully developed and settled Indian countryside from 2100, B. C., or even earlier. This facile reasoning ignores the essential difference between the two fertile alluvial basins of the Indus and the Ganges. Rainfall is low in Sind and the lower Punjab. There was no need to clear extensive or dense forests, nor was food-gathering away from the river a strong possibility. This meant earlier development of agricultural food production on flood-irrigated land. The Gangetic plain, on the other hand, has a decidedly heavier rainfall. The oldest settlements had to be near the foothills, because clearing the land by fire was not difficult there; it was not at all easy where the alluvial soil (with its forest cover) lay deep. (This important difference also explains why extensive conquests and wars between cities or tribes, as in pre-conquistador Mexico or South America were not likely in the Gangetic region in the third millennium, B. C. The Incas and the Aztecs faced a situation where the cities were centers of expanding rings of cleared land which rapidly lost its fertility. The cultivation of beans and maize by digging-stick culture was feasible only where the forest was tractable; not on the Amazon or the Orinoco). Aryan land-clearing by fire for regular agricultural settlement, as distinguished from shifting slash-and-burn cultivation, was conceived as a sacrifice to Agni. The progress of such clearing from the Sarasvatī eastwards to Videha (south of Nepal) and beyond is clearly described in a famous passage of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (*ŚB* 1.4.1.14-16). The one exceptional region which lies at some distance from the northern hills but could still have been usefully cleared by fire is precisely Kuru-land, the low watershed between the Punjab and the Gangetic basin. Delhi Ridge and Panipat were of considerable strategic importance in later times, which would make the spurious magnification of the Bharatan war quite plausible. But the importance of this territory at the dawn of history must lie in its early transition from food-gathering to plough agriculture. Finally, the present fertile riparian tract of the Ganges has very little stone for tools, let alone metal. The best land there could not have been cleared without an ample supply of cheap metal, namely iron. The heavy rainfall and excellent soil guaranteed a dense forest cover in prehistory. Primeval forest (*mahāvana*) covered the greater part of the region in the 6th century, B. C. The Buddha could spread his doctrine only along a few trade-routes. The Arthaśāstra takes the norm of settlement in the 4th century, B. C., as in scattered *janapada* units separated by extensive tracts of forest and wasteland; whereof the latter was to be settled under state control, but the former left to the *āṭavika* forest savages till they could be corrupted and tamed. Land-clearing on a large scale by fire was ended by Asoka's fifth pillar edict. That this was not a Buddhist vagary is seen from Mbh 12.35.7, 12.35.30, etc., where dying Bhīṣma also forbids the practice as a sin, except when necessary to save cattle.

Iron was a closely guarded monopoly outside India till nearly the end of the second millennium, B. C. There is no likelihood that it developed earlier in India. The Indus basin has no sources of iron, while food-gathering was rather easy in the eastern river-valley. This ease of food-gathering not only means less urgent need for plough culture but also underlies the *vānaprastha* retreat and the rise of mendicant sects in 6th century Magadha. Even in Mahārāṣṭra, where the average soil is less fertile, over 40 varieties of staples (not counting edible fruit, nuts, tubers, vegetables, mushrooms, etc.) are recognised as *dhānya* and *upadhānya*. Though most of these are now cultivated, all but three or four can be found wild under suitable conditions. Moreover, it is possible to show[7] that Mahārāṣṭra did not have extensive plough-using villages before the 6th century, B. C., hence no kingship in the sense required by the Bharatan war, nor cavalry, nor the possibility of Marāṭhā-Haihaya raids. The intervening terrain is unsuitable for long-distance campaigns in chariots without iron tyres (the earlier covering for wheel-rims was rawhide); the horse was not ridden till the end of the 2nd millennium, B. C. It is most improbable that iron was sufficiently plentiful anywhere in India for the existence of local kingdoms which could supply large contingents for a war at Kurukṣetra in 950, B. C.

W. Ruben, in a useful study of Kṛṣṇa legends,[8] reached the conclusion that the demigod was of

[7] That this follows from analysis of the Bāvari story in the Suttanipāta has been shown in chapter IV of my book *Myth & Reality*.

[8] W. Ruben: *Krishna; Konkordanz und Kommentar der Motive seines Heldenlebens* (Istanbul, 1943).

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non-Aryan origin (because of his black skin-colour and conflict with Indra). Removal of the mythical element by comparison with foreign legends and myths leaves a residue which seemed to Ruben evidence of a real conflict between Mathurā and Rajgir, capital of the Magadhan king Jarāsaṃdha. This conclusion seems unlikely to me. The two places are over 500 miles apart as the crow flies, while the trade-route was much longer. Military operations over such a distance before the fifth century, B. C., are hardly plausible; but by then, the Ganges had become the main transport artery and Patna the capital of the Śiśunāga dynasty. Rajgir owed its situation, as Magadha owed its later imperial glory, to the proximity and control of sources of iron and copper. Mathurā could not have had a good supply of either metal before Magadha gained a virtual monopoly of both by the 6th century, B. C. On the other hand, Mirzapur cave paintings depict charioteers fighting with aborigines who do not have horses; one hero in a two-horse chariot is about to hurl the missile discus, Kṛṣṇa's special weapon. The pictures may be placed early in the first millennium, B. C., so that the fight is either between immigrant Rajgir settlers and the horseless autochthones or between raiding 'Aryans' from a distance—presumably in search of iron ore—and the aborigines.

The extant Mbh shows tremendous Bhārgava[9] influence. Magadhan tradition including the Buddhist was, in contrast, overwhelmingly dominated by the Kaśyapa Brahmins. This is seen from the position of Asita or Kāla Devala (a leading Kaśyapa) in the Mbh and in Pali sources which place that sage's death just after the birth of the Buddha. The outstanding figure in the Buddhist Order at the time of the Teacher's death was Mahā-Kassapa; various Kassapas were the leading contemporary Magadhan gymnosophists. The list of 'former Buddhas' also contains several Kassapas. The Jain Mahāvīra was made into a Kassapa by 'exchange of embryos,' in spite of his impeccable Licchavi kṣatriya birth. The Bhṛgus as such have no special honour in the oldest veda (though the second book of the Ṛgveda is ascribed to the Gṛtsamadas, of the Jamadagni clan, eventually Bhārgavas); the Kaśyapas have even less, merely the supposed authorship of many individual hymns, particularly in the ninth (*soma*) book with just one solitary reference to the name in *RV* 9. 114.2. These newcomers could not have been the founders of Aryan tradition in the U. P. *à la* Pargiter, for both in Pāli accounts and the Upaniṣads[10] we find eastern Brahmins going to Taxila (which could, therefore, not have been occupied by Nagas) or even further west to learn their business, the Aryan-Vedic *yajña* fire-sacrifice ritual. The highly composite Mahābhārata which we possess today shows that the two Brahmin groups had come to terms with each other and with the aborigines too, inasmuch as Kaśyapa is promoted in the Mbh to the high position of fathering all creation—including the Nagas—as a *prajāpati*. The half-Naga Āstīka who saved the Nagas from Janamejaya's vengeance had an eminent Bhṛgu preceptor (1.44.18). I suggest that this compromise between the different traditions was a late but essential contrivance.

The accord must have been post-Buddhistic in any case. The earlier brahmins could afford to be and indeed had to be parochial in order to retain any importance in a society composed of pastoral tribes in perpetual conflict; victory in Aryan tribal warfare meant, as a preliminary, the *yajña* sacrifice, generally a Brahmin monopoly which is flatly condemned nevertheless in 14.92-96. The repeated emphasis upon non-killing (*ahiṃsā*), so incongruous in a war-story of slaughter to extermination, can hardly have been popular before Asoka. The two Yavana cities Antākhī and Romā of 2.28. 49 are to be identified with Antioch and Rome. These cities can hardly have reached any importance for Indians except by trade, and that not before the 1st or 2nd century, A. D. Sahadeva did not approach them but received tribute from them by sending heralds, apparently from Bharukaccha, (Barygaza of the Greeks and the modern Broach) which was in fact the great emporium of that period. The direct trade with Rome and the Mediterranean was terminated in the 3rd century, A. D., by the rise of the Sassanians, the defeat of the Roman emperor Valerian by Sapor and the "Thirty Tyrants" chaos.

Some of the peculiar features of the epic are thus due to the differences between old tradition and later reality. For example, Kṛṣṇa's Dvārakā is now located by Hindu tradition in Kathiawad, on the sea. This is south of Mathurā, which is

[9] V. S. Sukthankar: *Epic Studies VI: The Bhṛgus And The Bhārata*; the Memorial Edition of his collected works, Poona 1944, vol. 1, pp. 278-337; reprinted from the *ABORI* 18.1-76.

[10] *Cf.* Malalasekera's *Dictionary* in note 5 *sub* Ṭakkasilā; also, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.3.1; 3.7.1.

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taken to prove the formation of that particular southern trade-route in antiquity according to Ruben's analysis. But the Mbh is absolutely clear (2.13.24 and again 2.13.49) that Dvārakā was settled by refugees who fled WESTWARDS from Mathurā in fear of Jarāsaṃdha, not to the south. The original Dvārakā could not have been on the sea. The relevant trade-route was the northern land-route through Afghanistan to Persia and Palestine. The women of the Yādavas (after the men had killed each other off) were abducted by the Ābhīras from the convoy of Arjuna. The Ābhīra tribes were placed on the lower Indus by the geographer Ptolemy.[11] This means that, even in the 2nd century, A. D., they would have found the interception of caravans from the modern Dvārakā to Delhi rather difficult. But 2.29.9 puts them higher upstream, on the Sarasvatī, which had dried up by the time of the Brāhmaṇas. This location would increase the likelihood that the original Dvārakā lay to the west and not to the south of Kuru-land. The Ābhīras are not a Vedic tribe, nor do they occur in the Brāhmaṇas. Ptolemy's geography, though distorted for the peninsula, seems fairly reliable for the north; his report[12] of the Brakhmanoi Magoi under mount Bettigo agrees surprisingly well with the *Sāmba Purāṇa*, which places Maga brahmin sunworshippers on the Candrabhāgā river—presumably a migration during the early Kuṣāṇa period.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE SYNTHESIS. The Mbh redaction thus enlarged trifling local incidents into world-shaking events. Petty though perhaps desperate tribal conflicts appeared as a struggle for universal empire. Originally unrelated and even contradictory reports were combined into one document without troubling to remove logical inconsistencies. This should indicate a mass of recitative material already formed which had to be respected, while society as well as tribes and dynasties had changed so much that the precise historical content no longer mattered to anyone. Clearly, the Mbh 'war'—as distinct from some stages of the redaction—cannot represent 'Aryan' or 'Hindu' expansion, a supposedly universal 'epic period' between the 'Vedic' and the 'Buddhist' periods which appear in our textbooks. The Ṛgveda is concerned primarily with the Punjab; the Buddhist period means the political and military expansion of Magadha (which did not exist in the earlier Vedic period) over the whole of India, if these two periods have any meaning at all. If the great epic dealt with negligible tribal principalities like the Kuru offshoot of the Pūru tribe, its supposed events deserve no 'period' of their own, even if a single age could be ascribed to them all. The prime historical and social context of the document can only be change (in a comparatively restricted locality between the Punjab and the Ganges) from food-gathering to food-production; the redaction of the epic merely reflects the change. This adaptation of myths and cults (into amphictyonys worshipping common gods) eventually became a normal process for peaceful assimilation of food-gathering tribal aborigines into a wider, plough-using agricultural synoikism with caste and class division. Many later groups naturally wanted a respectable ancestry which the unwieldy epic could provide by inclusion of a suitable *upākhyāna* or by adding the proper chieftain to one of the contending armies; here we are concerned only with the major trends.

The Kṛṣṇa legend may be used again to show this feature of the epic. The killing of Jarāsaṃdha was a treacherous affair, like most of Kṛṣṇa's advice during the great battle[13] in which he did no active fighting. The local knowledge shown of Rajgir is accurate, or at least tallies well with Buddhist records. But the senseless desecration of the holy antique *caitya* at Rajgir (presumably the Pāsāṇaka Cetiya where the Buddha rested so often) by Bhīma and Kṛṣṇa seems wanton sacrilege (2.19.19), unsupported by any other record. Why the Jarāsaṃdha episode appears at all is not clear, unless it reflects in some way one of the few original exploits of any daring reported in lays of the Mathurā collection. The main Kṛṣṇa feat in the Mbh is the killing of Śiśupāla, king of Cedi. A Cedi tribe receives a special blessing in one *ṛk* of the Ṛgveda (*RV* 8.5.39), but its territory must have been close to the Śibi and Madra country (near Sialkot or Shorkot) according to the Vessantara Jātaka. In any case, the kingdom had become extinct before the Buddha. The Cedis of the Mbh are to the east of Delhi, and south-east of Fyzabad, on the way to Rajgir, presumably the ephemeral and puny Ceti or Cecca of

[11] J. W. McCrindle: *Ancient India As Described By Ptolemy* (London, Trubner 1885), to be distinguished from the work in note 2; p. 136.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 167, section 74, with the principal city Brakhmê.

[13] *Myth and Reality*, chap. I, originally published without illustrations in *JESHO* vol. 4, 1960.

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Pali books, somewhere near Nepal. The reproaches (2.38.13 ff.) that Śiśupāla levels against Kṛṣṇa in Yudhiṣṭhira's assembly are insulting but not wholly undeserved. Kṛṣṇa's killing him, the senior guest, before the assembled kings would have polluted the investiture ceremony and called for immediate reprisals. That the whole story was foreign to the nucleus furnished by Kuru-Pandu bards and ollaves is quite obvious. For, Śiśupāla's personal name is given as Sunītha. After his supposed decapitation by Kṛṣṇa, 'Sunītha, king of Cedi' nevertheless attaches the standard to Yudhiṣṭhira's triumphal chariot (2.49.6). In 2.41.32, Śiśupāla's son had been crowned on the spot by Arjuna, who had no right to nominate the successor; moreover, by Indian custom, the son (whose name is not given) would not bear the father's personal name. The discrepancy is noted only by three southern MSS which try to smooth it over, changing Sunītha in 2.49 to 'son of Sunītha.' The conflict between a Kṛṣṇa and some Cedi king was important to the demigod's saga, but irrelevant and absent from the primary Mbh. That it could forcibly be inscribed indicates that the Kurus and Pandus were actually or virtually extinct at the time. Such intrusion would not have been necessary unless a significant number of people still claimed Yadu (and Naga) origins at the time the episode was written into the text of the epic.

Invading Greeks found the cult of Kṛṣṇa-Herakles spread over the Punjab as a major Indian worship of the 4th century, B.C., with Mathurā acknowledged as its principal centre. The most reasonable period as well as explanation for such a cult expansion would be the 'flight from Mathurā in fear of Jarāsaṃdha'; there is no other evidence for this, but the legend probably represents a real westward scattering of the tribes for whom the pastoral demigod Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā was a patron deity. This might account also for the venomous rage against Rajgir implied by the destruction of the *caitya* and the highly improbable killing of Jarāsaṃdha. Kṛṣṇa had thus become a figure of much more than local importance, whose adoption into the epic would hold wider audiences. On the other hand, a Kṛṣṇa had, or was ascribed, some connection with the junior branch of the Kurus, for the sister Subhadrā had been carried off by Arjuna. This is less improbable than the killing of Jarāsaṃdha and Śiśupāla, in view of the short distance and easy transport between Mathurā and Delhi. Such a marriage by bride-capture should normally have led to hostilities unless it were customary and the alliance desirable; the parallel is with the Romans and Sabines, while the custom may underlie the disgraceful Ābhīra rape. Subhadrā may even have been the human representative of a Yadu mother-goddess, but the incident cannot be entirely meaningless. The five Pandava brothers had a wife-in-common, Draupadī, while each of the brothers had one or more other wives not in common. This indicates traditional primitive custom which became repugnant to later 'Hinduism'; indeed, Yudhiṣṭhira calmly offers uninterrupted ancestral custom as simple excuse against refinements of *dharma* (1.187.28) when the bride's indignant father tries to reason with him against the polyandrous marriage. For that matter, bride-purchase as of Mādrī (1.105.4-5) for Pandu is forbidden by the *smṛtis* as un-Aryan, along with bride-capture and polyandry. It is not necessary to postulate a Tibetan invasion to explain Pandava polyandry; the technical term *sādhāraṇī* used for Draupadī as wife-in-common is also to be found in the Ṛgveda for the goddess Rodasī, common wife to all the Maruts, indubitably Aryan group-gods (*RV* 1.101.7; 5.56.9; 1.167.4, etc.). What is needed is change of preconceptions of what was and was not 'Aryan,' at any given time and place.

Kṛṣṇa's black skin colour seems to make him a non-Aryan; but 'Aryan' was never a 'pure race'; adoption into any Aryan tribe was always permissible. His marriage—one of so many—to Jāmbavatī, daughter of a *ṛkṣa* (bear) king denotes intercourse with tribal savages of the bear totem. The Jātakas call her *Cāṇḍālī, mātā Sibbissa rājino, bhariyā Vasudeva-Kaṇhassa* (*F* 6.421). Kṛṣṇa's *gokula* with its booly from mount Govardhana to the riverside opposite Mathurā implies a regular pastoral way of life. Horse-drawn chariots which were the principal Aryan innovation for India and the *cakra* (wheel-discus) are prominent in the saga. Therefore, if Kṛṣṇa were not an 'Aryan,' his way of life was Aryan enough. The tricky aggression which he planned and his ferocity against Kaṃsa, Śiśupāla and Jarāsaṃdha would do credit to Ṛgvedic Indra. Only the heady *soma* drink is missing, perhaps compensated by Balarāma's intoxication. The demigod of Mathurā can at worst be regarded as a figure intermediate between Vedic Aryans and the non-Aryan autochthones. His relation to the Nagas is particularly

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interesting. The child Kṛṣṇa trampled down but spared the Naga Kāliya who prevented occupation of the Yamunā bank and access to the river pool. With Kṛṣṇa's full cooperation, the Pāṇḍavas burned out the Khāṇḍava jungle (1.215-219) to found their new city Indraprastha (near Delhi; traditionally, the Purana Qila). The land-clearing operation is represented in the Mbh as a grand blood-sacrifice to the Aryan fire-god Agni, with deliberate extermination of every creature that tried to escape the ring of fire. Nevertheless, the principal Naga Takṣaka, Indra's special friend, had gone to Kurukṣetra (1.219.13) and so escaped the conflagration (abandoned by Indra, he was later barely rescued by Āstīka from Janamejaya's fire). Innumerable lesser Nagas were killed. This holocaust of the Khāṇḍava forest had not been consummated earlier because Indra foiled every previous attempt by bringing down untimely rain to extinguish the fire.

If, after all this, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother Balarāma is made the primeval earth-bearing Naga incarnate, there must have been some later synthetic accord between the group of Naga myths and the completely hostile Kṛṣṇa saga. This would be incomprehensible without a corresponding rapprochement between the distinct but contiguous human groups that held two distinct sets of cults in respect. Balarāma's special attribute is the plough, an implement of no use to human Nagas if they remained food-gatherers. Yet, to this day, the Indian peasant's favourite *kṣetrapāla*, guardian of the plough-fields, is the Cobra, usually carved in relief on a slab of stone. That Balarāma's biography had been locally revised to order is proved by the Jātaka version (No. 454, Ghata-Jātaka). There is no mention in the Magadhan (Pali) account of the Naga incarnate. Balarāma does not give up the ghost on the seashore before a great concourse of Negas, as in the Mbh, but is crunched up like an edible tuber (*F* 4.88) by a forest demon Kālamaṭṭiya. This *yakṣa* was in fact a rebirth of Kaṃsa's pancratiast Muṭṭhika whom Baladeva had killed in the arena. The sole survivor of the tribe was the sister—not called Subhadrā but Añjanadevī.

Previous enmity between Kṛṣṇa and Indra is shown by the Govardhana episode. The multiple struggle for easily cultivable territory saw curious alliances, if the record be accepted. Jungle life of modern Naga tribes would suggest that the Mbh Nagas were food-gathering aborigines ready to change over. There is no question of a wide-spread Naga population; the name must indicate in a group many thinly scattered, linguistically and perhaps ethnically diverse, primitive tribesmen who had a snake totem or snake worship among other totems and worship. The Jātaka (*F* 4.81; 5.18) appellation Andhaka-Veṇhu Dāsaputtā indicates that Kṛṣṇa's tribe was also regarded as non-Aryan barbarians in early Magadhan legend.

The original Kuru lays must have been a lament at the defeat of the nobler 'pure' Aryans (*cf.* the exemplary Uttarakurus of legend, 2.25.11) by upstart cousins who permitted less advanced forms of marriage. The later glorification of the Pāṇḍavas was obviously due to the victory and survival of the rude junior line. Kṛṣṇa thrust his way in, though initially part of a rival tradition, because he had a cult which outgrew the restricted territory of his original tribe. The quite unnecessary coronation (17.1.8-9) by the Pāṇḍavas of a Yadu refugee named Vajra at Indraprastha, while the rightful heir Parikṣit (posthumous son of Abhimanyu and grandson of the Yadu princess or mother-goddess Subhadrā) was to rule at Hastināpura, is too odd to be pure invention. Nothing is ever heard of this Vajra again. The simplest explanation would be the memory of a Yadu or Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi claim to some temporary occupation of at least the Indraprastha portion of Kuru-land. Similarly, there would have been no need to write the Naga frame story into the Mbh without the contemporary existence of people who were Nagas or claimed descent from the Nagas, as happened beyond any doubt in historic times.[14] The religious manifestation of

[14] F. E. Pargiter: *The Purāṇa Text Of The Dynasties Of The Kali Age* (Oxford, 1913; cited here as *DKA*) for synoptic edition of text, and translation. The Śiśunāgas (pp. 20-22; 68-9) under whom Magadha rose to its high potential may or may not have been Nagas in spite of the termination; no origin is given anywhere. For authentic Naga kings in Āryāvarta proper, contemporaries of the early Guptas and ruling in Mathurā as well as Campāvatī, *ibid.* pp. 53, 73. Gupta records attest the existence of these kings, 'exterminated' by Samudragupta according to the Hariṣeṇa Prasasti on the pillar at Prayāg (J. F. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* III, Calcutta 1888, pp. 10-17, line 21 of inscription); the son Candragupta II married the Naga princess Kuberanāgā. The nine Naga kings of the Puranas may possibly be the nine named by Samudragupta, some of whom are known by their coins (E. J. Rapson, *Indian Coins*, Strasbourg 1898, section 101; *JRAS* 1897, p. 421). The possibility of a late and specialized court redaction of the Mbh for the benefit of some kings of Naga origin has at least to be discussed, though the rise of Nagas to

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the same process is the iconographic adoption of the *nāga* (cobra) as bed and canopy for sleeping Viṣṇu, garland for Śiva, as well as an independent cult object by himself. In production, this meant the growth of a ring (around plough-using and pastoral territories) of aborigines who gradually learned cattle herding and agriculture, and had to be assimilated to food-producing society. A handful of immigrant, food-producing, or even pastoral 'Aryans' would rapidly outnumber the surrounding aboriginal Naga food-gatherers in a few generations because of faster breeding due to the better food-supply. There is no Euhemerism involved in taking Naga as tribal and totemic; Buddhist rules forbidding the ordination of a Naga[15] would have been meaningless otherwise. That these legendary Nagas could assume the form of snakes or human beings at will compares with the relations of ancestral Hokkaido Ainus to their own totem, the bear.

5. THE KURU GENEALOGY. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is only a Naga (*F* 6.163 *ff*; clan 6.219) in Buddhist Jatakas. Kauravya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra are two separate Naga clans as reported in Mbh 1.31.13. The end of the Kuru king Dhṛtarāṣṭra by a forest fire which consumed his body, exhausted by ascetic food-gathering life in the jungle (15.45), is peculiarly reminiscent of the Nagas destroyed by burning down the Khāṇḍava forest. If this Bharatan king Dhṛtarāṣṭra were not in some way claimed by the Nagas, there would be no reason to send him after death to the world of Kubera (18.5.11) who is lord of goblins and demons. The underworld Naga Dhṛtarāṣṭra made every effort to prevent Arjuna's resurrection according to Jaimini's version of the Aśvamedha-parvan. The record is decidedly mixed here, but there is other evidence that the Aryan Pūrus had a small western Kuru branch which intermarried with local people, some of whom must have been non-Aryan aboriginal Nagas.

The Adi-parvan contains two Kuru genealogies in successive chapters, (1.89 and 1.90), of which the former is in standard *anuṣṭubh* metre; the next, one of the few prose passages of the Mbh. The verse account is brought down only to the time of Śaṃtanu of the Bhārata tribe, for the birth of Bhīṣma is given in full detail as an essential part of the main story elsewhere. The prose account begins with creation and comes down not only to Janamejaya III, to whom it was being recited but to his grandson Aśvamedhadatta. In both, Pūru is the main founder. The two pedigrees do not contain a further common name till Matināra, 15th after Pūru in the second account. In 1.89, Matināra's grandmother is an unnamed *apsaras*, not supported by the second genealogy. In both accounts, the union of Duḥṣanta with Śakuntalā is made responsible for the birth of Bharata, thus became the ancestor of the great Ṛgvedic tribe, though the Ṛgveda does not know of this romantic detail. The first account claims that the military power of the Pañcālas drove the Bharatas under king Saṃvaraṇa from an unspecified location to a mountain stronghold on the Indus. After a thousand years, the white magic of their new priest Vasiṣṭha brought them back again to dominate the

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kingship seems to me too late and distant from the probable centers of Mbh redaction. The Śiśunāgas of Magadha (Rajgir-Patna) were off the scene a century or more before the Mauryans; they may have been Nagas but are emphatically called *kṣtrabandhavaḥ* in contempt by the Puranas, hence did not help Brahmins or Brahminism. K. P. Jayaswal's Nāga-Vākāṭaka period of 150-350, A.D. as an 'imperial' age (*JBORS* 19.1933.1-222; 289-318) is difficult to take seriously. The evidence has to be twisted—where it exists at all—in characteristic and specious Jayaswal fashion, while the contemporary Kuṣāṇa, Śaka and Sātavāhana kingdoms would have restricted the territory to some parts of central India. The first Puranic Naga king is given as Bhogin (*DKA* above, pp. 49, 72), *Śeṣasya Nāga-rājasya putraḥ*, after Sātavāhana rule had faded away; his rule and that of his archaeologically verifiable successors was close to Vidiśā, remote from the Bharatan scene. We have referred to the Karkoṭa dynasty in Kaśmīr. The theme of the 11th century poem *Navasāhasāṅka-caritam* is the marriage to the Naga princess Śaśiprabhā of Sindhurāja, father of Bhoja of Dhārā. The Nāgarāja given as author of the *Bhāvaśatakam* (*Kāvyamālā* 4, pp. 46-64) cannot be the contemporary of Samudragupta as some would take him; he is not before Bhoja in time and probably not far from Dhārā in place. It would seem that the Naga myths in the Mbh had wide acceptance in the middle ages; presumably, the Naga element of the epic itself derived from popular demand supplied by the brahmin redactors, not the necessity of flattering some king and his court.

[15] *Mahāvagga* 1.63, trans. *Sacred Books Of The East* vol. 13 (Oxford 1881), pp. 217-9. The actual question asked of the novice is to be 'art thou human?'; the story clearly bans initiation of Nagas into the Order. The stanzas at the end of the *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* state that the eighth portion of Buddha's relics claimed by the Koḷiyans was worshipped by Nagas at Rāmagāma, the Koḷiya capital. So, either the Koḷiyans were already extinct (like the Būlīs of Allakappa who shared in the relics but left no other record) or they were labelled Nagas as aborigines—which seems the likelier hypothesis. The complication here is that *nāga* can also mean 'elephant.'

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earth. The genealogy continues smoothly with Saṃvaraṇa, in spite of this millennial hiatus, so that the whole episode is a clear attempt to clamp the Mbh narrative onto the wellknown Ṛgvedic change of Bharatan priesthood[4] from Viśvāmitra to Vasiṣṭha. We then hear of Kuru, son of Saṃvaraṇa 'after whom is universally known the Kuru-wilderness (*kuru-jāṅgalam*); he, the great ascetic, made it into the holy Kuru-field (*kuru-kṣetram*) by his ascetic work' (1.89.43). Therefore, a Kuru, eponymous or not, had traditionally cleared and brought the wilderness under cultivation; his *tapas* (penance) is simple brahminization of a pioneer's hardships.

The second account has significant modifications. Ayutanāyi, seventh in line before Matināra, derived his name from the ritual sacrifice of a myriad men for his birth (1.90.19). Matināra's grandmother seems human enough, but his mother is here reported as the daughter of the Naga, Takṣaka, who is the crucial Naga in the frame-story. Matināra was wedded to none less than the river Sarasvatī, after a twelve-year *sattra* sacrifice on its banks. The river appeared personified to choose him as bridegroom. The son of this union, Taṃsu, begat Ilina upon Kālindī, which is a name of the river Yamunā. The son was Duḥṣanta, whose union with Śakuntalā is attested by all accounts, though she is called an *apsaras* only in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚB* 13.5.4.11; brought up by a Kaśyapa named Kaṇva). In this line, king Hastī, founder of Hastināpura, precedes Kuru, whereas the earlier account seems more logical in taking Kuru as the ancestor. One of the descendants, Parikṣit I, married a Bāhudā named Suyaśā; Bāhudā seems mysterious as a tribal name, but there is an eastern river with that appellation. The point is worth emphasizing because the marriage of Śaṃtanu to the river Ganges led to the birth of Bhīṣma.

Pargiter (*AIHT* pp. 134-5) rationalized such marriages with the explanation that human brides bore the same name as rivers. But he could not explain why marriage with girls bearing the names of rivers was considered dangerous as late as the Manusmṛti (*Ms* 3.9), and other Hindu scriptures. It is not against modern Hindu custom. The sole reason anyone can adduce is that it WAS dangerous at some earlier stage to marry such 'rivers,' i.e., their human representative, and the *apsarasas*. The husband was liable to be sacrificed, in older days. Kṛṣṇa killed the mother-goddess Pūtanā, presumably because she demanded sacrifice of male children. Jarāsaṃdha, who is not reported at all in Buddhist tradition (unless he be the great and good Janasandha[15a] of Kāsī: *F* 2.297-300; 4.176-8, 180; at Kurukkhetta, *F* 6.291) was brought back whole and sound, from the crossroads at which he had been exposed in two halves as an infant to be eaten, by the demoness Jarā. This reluctant demoness, who was simultaneously a beautiful woman (characteristic of Indian mother-goddesses including Durgā-Kālī), was immediately recognized as the family goddess of the dynasty and received a cult at Rajgir (2.17.5). Whether she was related in some way to the hunter Jaras (nom. and Pali: Jarā), whose arrow shot into the heel caused Kṛṣṇa's death, is not clear. The content of such episodes is the change from prehistory to history, from matriarchal to fully patriarchal custom. Kṛṣṇa only continued the work of Aryan Indra. Where the former had to marry as many of

[15a] This name is undoubtedly represented in the Mbh as Jalasaṃdha, borne by two different characters. The lesser was one of the hundred jar-born Kaurava sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra (1.108.4[b]); a Jarāsaṃdha occurs in the same list of brothers at 1.108.9[a]. Both readings are a bit doubtful, but the Kaurava Jalasaṃdha was among fourteen brothers killed off in a single engagement by Bhīma (6.60.24-28). The other Jalasaṃdha is given as a great chariot-fighter, king of Magadha (5.164.24), whose name has the strong southern variant Jarāsaṃdha in 1.177.11.[c] This hero was killed fighting from an elephant, not a chariot (7.91.24-50), by the Yadu Sātyaki who has special prominence as the only survivor on the winning side except the five Pāṇḍava brothers and Kṛṣṇa himself. It may be that the killing of Jarāsaṃdha by Bhīma, with Kṛṣṇa of the Yadus looking on, was compounded of the stories of how the two Jalasaṃdhas met their end. The king bewailed in 11.25.7 by the Magadhan women on the corpse-strewn Bhāratan battle-field was named Jayatsena; the corpse cremated (in 11.26.37[d] along with whatever carrion-eaters had spared of the other glorious dead) again bore the name Jalasaṃdha. It is tantalising to note that the original sources were less confused and had some contact with history. There must have been some chronicle dating the end of the Kurus and of the Yadus. Otherwise, Gāndhārī's curse that Kṛṣṇa would come to a solitary, inglorious end in the forest, after all his kinsmen and progeny had been wiped out, precisely thirty-six years after the execration, would seem pointless. The Yavana warriors slaughtered by Sātyaki wore bronze and brass armour (7.95.35[ab]). As no other fighter in the battle showed this much sense, the stanzas must have been written after Alexander's raid, perhaps after Menander's. Sātyaki was attacked immediately afterwards by a savage mountaineer contingent that used only stone weapons, a prehistoric fashion with which no one on either side was familiar.

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the goddesses as he could, the Vedic war-god had unhesitatingly smashed the cult and wagon of Uṣas on the Vipāś river (*RV* 4.30.8-11) though the Uṣas cult remained nevertheless in the Vedas, important enough to be specially acknowledged by the *Aprī* hymns.

This accounts also for the necessity of the particular Brahmin diaskeuasis. The Brahmins as a caste have no special function in the Ṛgvedic hymns which they preëmpted later as their own special property. The Kaśyapas have clear connection with aborigines through the *prajāpati* myths and also the tortoise totem which their name indicates. It is very well known that a good many of the spurious Brahmins claim the Kāśyapa *gotra*.[16] The interdict which Hiraṇyakeśin-Satyāṣāḍha (*H. śrauta-sūtra* 10.4) places upon the Kaśyapas and Kaṇvas at feasts to the manes is no longer observed; but it cannot have been accidental. There is a clear-cut rule that if the child's *gotra* be unknown, the Kaśyapa *gotra* may unhesitatingly be ascribed. Lastly, if a child be born of a marriage between forbidden degrees, one rule would make it an outcaste Caṇḍāla while the other, seemingly more generous, says that it should be assigned to the gens Kaśyapa. This discrepancy is not so great as it seems, for the Caṇḍālas were a tribe (or several tribes) that became a low caste, due to stubborn persistence in breaking tabus kept by good Aryans; the Kaśyapas, on the other hand, rose slowly from their ambiguous position. In its own way, therefore, the exaggerated status of the Brahmins in the Mbh, though ridiculous pretention in a balanced food-producing society, was natural in primitive surroundings when witch-doctors and medicine-men seemed essential to collective human life. This emphasis upon superstition later kept the whole country backward; but it permitted the early formation of an integrated food-producing society beyond the tribe, with minimum violence, without the chattel slavery of Rome and Greece.

6. THE 'EPIC PERIOD.' The five major sources now discernible for the epic text do not simplify the task of extracting history from the events reported. The Kuru-Pandu lays dealt with the same happenings from opposite points of view; the Kṛṣṇa cycle was foreign to both as everyone admits. But what do the Naga stories represent? What can be done to restore the position before the double brahminization at Kaśyapa and Bhṛgu hands? Much more is involved here than a simple reduction of scale from the whole of India to tiny Kuru-land. Some of the minor characters have no function in the epic except to provide ancestors for historical people. The Yaudheya of Mbh 1.90. 83, given as son of Yudhiṣṭhira by the Śibi princess Devakī, would be a gratuitous addition if he had no eponymous relation to the historical Yaudheya tribe known through inscriptions and coins. There is the major task of removing several layers of myth. Was Draupadī a mother-goddess associated with five different male demigods? Bhava, Rudra, Śarva are distinct gods in the Vedas, while the feminine Bhavānī, Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī are found in the Amarakośa 1.1.39 as epithets for Durgā. It is not surprising to read in the Mahāmāyūrī-mantra (Sylvain Lévi in *JA 5.* 1915.i.19-138, particularly p. 40 *ff.*) that many of the Bharatan heroes on both sides were separately labelled the patron *yakṣas* of various localities.

This approach is promising and to a certain extent fruitful. The heroine Draupadī sprang full-grown in all her dark beauty (she was *kṛṣṇā*) from the flames of Drupada's sacrificial fire. Droṇa, a Bharadvāja, was not of woman born, *ayonisaṃbhava*. His birth from a wooden vessel (*droṇa*) which conceived from the seed of a *ṛṣi* stimulated by sight of the bathing apsaras, Ghṛtācī, is parallel to that of Vasiṣṭha (*RV* 7.33), and perhaps of Agastya. Droṇa's remarkable proficiency with the bow is more characteristic of the autochthonous *niṣādas* than of a proper Brahmin; the head-jewel that his son Aśvatthāman bore like any Naga is ground for deeper suspicion that Droṇa was Aryanized in the epic. The hundred sons and solitary daughter of Dhṛtarāṣṭra were born of a human mother Gāndhārī as a single ball of hard flesh, which had to be divided and placed in ghee-filled jars. There each piece matured like the foetus in

[16] The Gotra-pravara-Mañjarī of Puruṣottama translated by J. Brough: *The Early Brahmanical System Of Gotra And Pravara* (Cambridge, 1953) reports (after Baudhāyana) the ascription to the Kaśyapa *gotra* of a child born of a union against *gotra* exogamic rules (pp. 55, 203-4). On p. 197, the teacher's gotra is to be taken, if the disciple is ignorant of his own—which casts some light upon the supposed strictness and immutability of Brahmin observances. Chentsal Rao's edition of the text (p. 187) gives a note: *gotrasya tv aparijñāne Kāśyapam gotram iśyate* which makes the Kaśyapa gens a residuary for all doubtful brahmins. Census enumerators used to report that highly improbable claimants to Brahminhood in the hinterland generally offered the Kāśyapa *gotra*.

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its womb, and the children came forth. Let it be suggested that all these awkward births have a higher place in savage myth than in the Aryan; the womb-jar is symbolic of the mother-goddess, while the father was originally not on the scene, generally having to be sacrificed—if indeed fatherhood was recognized at all. The accursed, unfortunate Pandu could not make carnal love to either of his two wives; the first such attempt cost him his life. His sons and Karṇa were begotten by various high Vedic gods upon Kuntī and Mādrī. The Kuru genealogy cited above is thus reduced to a miserable, garbled footnote to these vigorous, enduring myths which can hardly be called Aryan. All this brings us no closer to a solution of the initial problem.

What meaning can we give then to the 'epic period'? As a historical period for the whole of India, the name is meaningless. However, the 'Vedic period,' though restricted to the Punjab, justified its name in Indian history by a significance beyond the actual territory. Development of the country beyond the Punjab, along the lines it followed for many centuries, was made possible by the warring pastoral groups with horse, chariot, plough, iron, knowledge of land-clearing and a rudimentary class-structure in the guise of caste. This meant the formation of new, viable Indian tribal states on a model which the impressive but decaying Indus cities could not or at least did not furnish. The 'Buddhist period' is supposedly justified by extension of the new religion over the whole country; of course, the real justification for the 'period,' by whatever name, is based upon its political and economic changes. It meant the transition from a narrow, tribal, overwhelmingly pastoral economy with its religious expression, the *yajña* fire-sacrifice, to the powerful state mechanism (army, bureaucracy, spies and political theorists) of an empire ruling extensively over a fully developed agrarian society settled in villages, with surplus production and commodity exchange. The formal expression of the change is the Magadhan empire at the time of Asoka. The Mbh events can claim neither the wide territory nor the direct politico-economic influence. Can we give the 'epic period' some meaning nevertheless?

The Ṛgvedic 'snake of the deep' *ahir budhnya* may be related to the Norse Midgard snake; but he did not develop into the great Naga Śeṣa who supports the earth, nor the Balarāma. The RV represents a take-over of land with reduction by force of some tribal Dasyus to *dāsa-śūdra* caste helotage. This was the period when the Indus cities, superior in culture but weak in battle, were destroyed. The assimilation of some *dāsas* (conjectured from the Ten Kings' battle in the *RV* and the names Divodāsa, etc.) did not reduce the violence. There was not enough water and grazing in the Punjab for all. If the report of Megasthenes has any meaning (Arrian's *Indika 8*), the Dionysos who conquered India can be equated only to *soma*-drinking Indra. This Indra-Dionysos 'founded cities, gave laws to those cities and introduced the use of wine among the Indians . . . first yoked oxen to the plough and made many of the Indians husbandmen instead of nomads and furnished them with the implements of agriculture . . . .' This makes sense only if the implements were of iron, brought into general use by a second major Aryan wave about the beginning of the first millennium, B. C. Nahuṣa was the name of a tribe and a tribal chief (*RV* 10.92.12; 1.100.16; 5.73.3 etc.) for the oldest Veda. Nahuṣa becoming Indra is plausible as succession to supreme Aryan leadership in war. His Mbh-Puranic tranformation into a snake—not a Naga cobra but a boa constrictor—has no specifically Indian bearing except to warn against overambition and maltreatment of Brahmins. Mandhātṛ (*RV* 8.39.8; 8.40.12.1.112.1), the sacrificer Yayāti (*RV* 1.31.17), Ikṣvāku (*RV* 10.60.5) and Purūravas (*RV* 10.95) provide continuity between the final stratum of the RV and the older Mbh legends, though the transformation is obvious; the moral of the stories now attached to these names is brahminical, not Ṛgvedic in content. That brahmins could always serve non-Aryan patrons is shown by the blessings Vaśa Aśvya calls down upon the *dāsa* king (or kings) Balbūtha Tarukṣa and the tribe (*RV* 8.46.32), whatever kingship meant at the time and place. The passage is roughly dated by mention of camel caravans (very rare in Vedic tradition, *e. g.*, *RV* 1.138.2). The camel—unlike the elephant—did not grow more popular in ancient India; cuneiform records show that the beast was tamed for transport and riding about 1200, B. C. The names Balbūtha and Tarukṣa have a foreign ring. Dīrghatamas, son of Ucathya and Mamatā gained stature in post-Vedic tradition. His original lament literally translated (*RV* 1.158. 4-6) shows that he became a river-pilot (*nadīnāṃ sārathi*) in his old age; which may account for his floating down the Ganges to Aṅgā in the *Bṛhaddevatā* and Puranic legend. The pioneer

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penetration of the densely wooded, unexplored, eastern territory connotated by this legend does not mean relatively peaceful combination of Aryan and non-Aryan.

On the other hand, the Naga component of the Mbh composition does imply a milder process of acculturation, localized in time and space. The locus is the Delhi-Mathurā region with some peripheral territory, particularly to the east. The time should be later than the Yajurvedic for Vedic gods are feeble and shadowy in the epic. The *Arthaśāstra* knows only cults of sacred cobras, not the Naga people. The snake cults had then become orthodox worship, whereas the untamable forest savages are called *āṭavikas*. If we take the Nagas of the Mbh as less developed than Kṛṣṇa's violent pastoral followers, but ripe for the change to food-production and for the introduction of a class-structure in the guise of caste (*cāturvarṇyam*), the curious tripartite (Kuru-Mathuran-Naga) base of the Mbh legends (before the Brahmins took hold) makes sense. Any Nagas thereafter, *e.g.*, the Karkoṭa dynasty of 8th century Kaśmīr, follow a standard pattern as an attempt on the part of some Brahmins to ennoble their aboriginal patrons. The epic period would then be the parent crystal that gave form and model to such later developments. The alternatives are simple enough. Either take the Mbh frame-story as the crude socio-historical image evoked by a fundamental change of attitude towards the autochthones. Or, abandon the historical approach altogether, in favour of pure myth. Then Nahuṣa may be referred to the brazen serpent Nehushtan, the standard of Moses later discarded by the Israelites as symptom of idolatry; Kāliya would be the Hydra despatched by Kṛṣṇa-Herakles and by earlier Mesopotamian heroes; surely Egyptian and Pelasgian snake-worship also compares with the Indian. This alternative would necessitate a separate explanation for every feature, with never-ending vacuous arguments when more than one explanation is offered. Reasons for choosing the first have been sketched here (a minor choice for relating the Mbh Nagas to the central Indian Naga kings being dismissed in note 14).

Janamejaya's *yajña* was the normal Aryan ritual prelude to military action. His destruction of the Nagas had historic parallels. The Kosalan Viḍūḍabha massacred the Sakyans; Ajātaśatru of Magadha exterminated the Licchavis and Mallas. Mahāpadma Nanda wiped out all remaining free oligarchical tribes of the Gangetic basin, about fifty years before Alexander's raid completed the process for the Punjab. But there was a fundamental difference. The later kings removed obstacles to the unchallenged rule of a sovereign emperor over fully developed agrarian society. Janamejaya's attack was against food-gatherers still beyond the pale. That his *sattra* was abandoned denotes some compromise which permitted relatively peaceful transition of the surviving 'Nagas' to food production by agriculture; of course, land clearing would make their former way of life impossible. Though the gods and demons had had to employ Vāsuki as the indispensable cord at Ocean's churning (1.16.12-15), fifteen chief Nagas of his line perished in Janamejaya's sacrificial fire (1.52.4-6). The all-god Kṛṣṇa proclaimed himself 'Vāsuki among snakes, Ananta among the Nagas' in the famous *vibhūti* passage of the Bhagavad-gītā (6.32.28-9). The curious but rather irrelevant visit of the Brahmin acolyte Uttaṅka to the mysterious Naga underworld (pit dwellings?) is reported twice (1.3; 14.55-58) for no apparent reason. The Nagas are conspicuous throughout for their lack of weapons and of prowess (*e.g.*, 8.63; 8.66). Their stories have not the moral content of the Gītā, Śānti, Anuśāsana, etc. Why, then, should Naga genealogies and trifling Naga episodes appear as an integral part of the great epic, the substantial *Astīka* sub-*parvan* (1. 13-53), while Kṛṣṇa's exploits and lineage were relegated to the Harivaṃśa supplement? Janamejaya's chief priest Somaśravas was born, like Astīka, of a brahmin father and a 'snake' mother (1.3.12-16). Brahmin diaskeuasts showed neither dismay nor shame at such intermixture, banned by *smṛti* and discouraged by Veda; nor were they prevented from declaring the Mbh a supreme Veda and *saṃhitā* (1.1.19, 61, 204). The acceptance of Naga kinship by Brahmins and of the stories by their audiences is such more significant than the actual details of the myths and legends. The Naga element in the Mbh indicates reciprocal acculturation. THE MBH BEGAN AS A KURU LAMENT, CHANGED INTO A PANDU SONG OF VICTORY; ABSORBED NAGA MYTHS DURING ACCULTURATION; ACQUIRED FRESH EPISODES FROM THE MATHURAN KṚṢṆA SAGA; AND WAS BRAHMINISED TO SOME EXTENT BY THE KAŚYAPAS, BUT OVERWHELMINGLY BY THE BHṚGUS INTO ITS PRESENT FORM.

The interpretation suggested in this paper can be given some archaeological support. Indian ex-

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cavations have not been designed, nor executed with sufficient care, to allow collation with the oldest extant documents, as witness slipshod work at and general neglect of Rajgir. Quite sober archaeologists[17] take the Kuru empire and the Mahābhārata battle as historical reality, heedless of the logistic problems involved and lack of evidence for iron. B. B. Lal's exploratory digging at Hastināpura[18] is about the only bit of archaeology of use to us here; I interpret his finds as follows. The autochthones, Nagas or not, must be identified with Hastināpura I, as the makers of the badly fired ochre-washed pottery of which a few miserable fragments were found in this lowest stratum. Lal would like to associate this pottery with the characteristic copper artifacts found elsewhere in several Gangetic hoards.[19] If so, this would further prove the fitness of the Hastināpura I people to rise to agriculture. Let it be noted that the first such copper objects (like the homo-figure) discovered on the surface were still regarded with superstition in the jungle where they lay unburied. Kuru land-clearing and occupation can only be associated with Hastināpura II and the excellent Grey Painted ware. Archaeologists puzzle over this pottery, for calling it 'Aryan' leads to contradiction in that many indubitably Aryan sites produce no trace of the grey painted ware. However, Childe[20] showed that the Aryans had no really characteristic common pottery but were remarkably good at the adoption of whatever local productive technique suited their needs. If the grey painted ware be labelled not just Aryan but specifically Pūru ceramics, the main difficulty is resolved. The label then gives information about the spread of one powerful group of Aryans. The top portion of Hastināpura II was eroded by a flood; this seems to tally with the Puranic record of Nicakṣu, fifth local king after the great battle, who therefore had to move his capital down to Kauśāmbī. The two sets of excavations at Hastināpura and Kosambī have not yet been properly collated, nor sufficiently extensive to settle this point. Much more important, however, Hastināpura II contains (according to Lal) the first traces of iron slag though unfortunately no iron objects have been found in the small portion explored. As there is no Harappan find at the site, we have here the full mechanism of the real Aryanization of India, the advance of plough, iron and brahminism over the whole land.

[17] D. H. Gordon: *The Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1958). The survey is very good for the frontier region of what is now Pakistan, but a bit weak in the explanation of Indian culture as such. Though finding no evidence for iron before 400 B. C., Gordon noted the excellence of Indian STEEL swords as reported by Ctesias and Herodotos for the end of the 5th century, B.C. (Artaxerxes Mnemon). This surely implies a good supply of iron by 600, B. C., and knowledge of the metal even earlier.

[18] B. B. Lal: *Ancient India* 9.1953.80-102; *10-11*. 1954-5-151.

[19] V. A. Smith: *IA*. *34*.1905.229-244; *36*.1907.53-5. B. B. Lal: *Ancient India* 7.1951.20-39. *JBORS* vol. *1, 2,* for the modern superstition.

[20] V. Gordon Childe: *The Aryans* (London 1926).

"AGENT" ET "OBJET" CHEZ PĀṆINI

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SI, DANS L'ENSEMBLE DE LA LINGUISTIQUE ACTUELLE, le domaine de la syntaxe reste un des plus obscurs, la cause en est sans doute que, plus qu'aucun autre, il se dérobe aux définitions. Ainsi, des notions aussi primordiales que celles de sujet, objet, actif, passif, n'ont pu encore être établies d'une façon susceptible de remporter une large adhésion.

Sans prétendre proposer de réponse à ces questions, le présent article a pour objet d'exposer les théories des grammairiens indiens qui y ont trait, théories qui, croyons-nous, peuvent apporter quelque lumière à une discussion d'ordre général.

Force nous est, cependant, pour situer dès l'abord la position des grammairiens indiens, de faire allusion à des conceptions occidentales capables d'offrir un terme de comparaison intéressant. Ainsi, parmi les définitions erronées du sujet, dont M. Ér. Buyssens a fait justice,[1] nous voudrions

[1] "La conception fonctionnelle des faits linguistiques," dans: *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique*, 1950, pp. 37-53.

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